AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the present application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remains under examination in the application are presented below. The claims are presented in ascending order and each includes one status identifier. Those claims not cancelled or withdrawn but amended by the current amendment utilize the following notations for amendment: 1. deleted matter is shown by strikethrough for six or more characters and double brackets for five or less characters; and 2. added matter is shown by underlining.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Currently Amended) The crosslinking agent of claim 25 [[23]] wherein said crosslinking agent is linear.

25. (Currently Amended) A water soluble polymeric crosslinking agent comprising:

an inert polymeric component,

a biodegradable component, and

a branch comprising a protein reactive functional component. ~~The crosslinking agent of claim 23~~

wherein said crosslinking agent comprises a plurality of branches, wherein said plurality is greater than two.

26. (Currently Amended) The crosslinking agent of claim 25 [[23]], wherein said inert polymeric component is flanked at each end with said biodegradable component which is flanked at each end with said protein reactive functional component.

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27. (Previously Presented) The crosslinking agent of claim 26, wherein the protein reactive functional component is chosen from the group consisting of carbodiimidazole, sulfonyl chloride, chlorocarbonates, hydroxysuccinimidyl esters, aryl halides, sulfasuccinimidyl esters, and maleimides.

28. (Currently Amended) A polymeric crosslinking agent for use in vivo with a patient comprising a biologically inert core attached to a polymer having a biodegradable component with the polymer being attached to a reactive functional group capable of forming a covalent bond in water with at least one functional group chosen from the group consisting of amine and thiol, wherein the crosslinking agent has at least [[two]] three functional groups and is water soluble.

29. (Previously Presented) The crosslinking agent of claim 28 wherein the biodegradable component does not contain amino acids assembled in amino acid sequences that are enzymatically degradable when the crosslinker is placed in a patient.

30. (Previously Presented) The crosslinking agent of claim 28 wherein the biodegradable component comprises a polymer chosen from the group consisting of glycolide, lactide, caprolactone, dioxanone, and trimethylene carbonate.

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31. (Previously Presented) The crosslinking agent of claim 28 wherein the biodegradable component comprises a hydrolytically degradable chemical group chosen from the group consisting of ester, acetal, anhydride, orthoester, or disulfide.

32. (Previously Presented) The crosslinking agent of claim 28 wherein the biodegradable component comprises a polymer chosen from the group consisting of polyhydroxyacid, polyorthocarbonate, polyanhydride, polylactone, polyaminoacid, and polyphosphate.

33. (Previously Presented) The crosslinking agent of claim 28 wherein the biodegradable component is hydrolyzable under in vivo conditions.

34. (Currently Amended) A polymeric crosslinking agent for use in vivo with a patient comprising a biologically inert core attached to at least three [[two]] branches that each comprise a biodegradable component hydrolyzable under in vivo conditions and the at least three branches are each terminated with a reactive end group capable of forming a covalent bond in water with at least one functional group chosen from the group consisting of amine and thiol wherein 1 g of the crosslinking agent is soluble in 100 milliliters of water.

35. (Previously Amended) The crosslinking agent of claim 34 having at least four of the branches.

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36. (Previously Presented) The crosslinking agent of claim 34 wherein the biodegradable polymer comprises a polymer chosen from the group consisting of glycolide, lactide, caprolactone, dioxanone, and trimethylene carbonate.

37. (Previously Presented) The crosslinking agent of claim 34 wherein the biodegradable polymer comprises a polymer chosen from a group consisting of polyhydroxyacid, polyorthocarbonate, polyanhydride, polylactone, polyaminoacid, and polyphosphate.

38. (Previously Presented) The crosslinking agent of claim 34 wherein the core comprises polyalkylene oxide.

39. (Previously Presented) The crosslinking agent of claim 38 wherein the core comprises at least three sequential -(CH_2CH_2O)- repeats.

40. (Currently Amended) The crosslinking agent of claim 34 having a molecular weight from 600 to 10,000 Daltons.

41. (Currently Amended) The crosslinking agent of claim 34 having a molecular weight from 600 to 100,000 Daltons.

42. (Currently Amended) A method of making a polymeric crosslinking agent for use in vivo with a patient comprising activating at least [[two]] three end groups of a polymer

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that comprises a biodegradable component hydrolyzable under in vivo conditions and polyalkylene oxide such that the polymer is thereby terminated with reactive functional groups that are capable of forming a covalent bond in water with at least one functional group chosen from the group consisting of amine and thiol.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 comprising choosing the biodegradable component to comprise a member of the group consisting of glycolide, lactide, caprolactone, dioxanone, and trimethylene carbonate.

44. (Previously Presented) The crosslinking agent made according to the process of claim 43.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 comprising choosing the biodegradable component to comprise a member of the group consisting of polyhydroxyacid, polyorthocarbonate, polyanhydride, polylactone, polyaminoacid, and polyphosphate.

46. (Previously Presented) The crosslinking agent made according to the process of claim 45.

47. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 42 comprising making the crosslinking agent to have a molecular weight from 600 to 10,000 Daltons.

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48. (Currently Amended) The crosslinking agent of claim 42 having a molecular weight from 600 to 100,000 Daltons.

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